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*Jerusalem and the Nations: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* contains two decades of Isaianic research by R. E. Clements, former Samuel Davidson Professor of Old Testament Studies at Kings College, London. The book comprises a number of previously published essays and eight chapters of new material, so that half of the book contains original research. This work differs from Clements’s earlier book, *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), which consisted entirely of previously published essays. In addition to offering fresh insights, the addition of this new material provides a level of cohesiveness to the overall theme and argument. The book contains an introductory essay as well as an epilogue and is divided into three parts: “Prophecy in New Perspective,” “Isaiah and Jerusalem’s Deliverance in 701 BCE,” and “The Book of Isaiah in a Persian Context.”

Part 1 addresses hermeneutical concerns with an opening chapter outlining Clements’s interpretive method. He believes that prophets originally preached short sayings addressing specific events that were then edited into short collections. These shorter collections were then reinterpreted to address later events and incorporated into books that reflect both elements of the prophecy’s original context, as well as subsequent periods. The editors of the prophetic books assumed that prophecy revealed the divine plan of an unchanging God, so prophetic books were composed in a manner that reflects
a set of core canonical principles. Scribes functioned as prophets, and through the use of intertextual references to earlier prophecies and other Scriptures, they discerned the mind of God. In chapter 2 Clements critiques inaccurate caricatures of Israel’s prophets as socially marginalized individuals and instead locates them within Israel’s religious institutions. Chapter 3 provides Clements’s view regarding the composition of the book of Isaiah. He believes that chapters 5–62 represents the “primary scroll” of Isaiah and considers the addition of that chapters 1–4 and 63–66 as late apocalyptic reinterpretations of this prophecy and thus peripheral to the book’s main message. He is critical of Duhm’s proposal of a tripartite division to the book because it fails to account for the late prophecies in so-called First Isaiah, as well as the apocalyptic additions to the book. Regarding the latter texts Clements remarks, “Duhm should really have had a ‘Fourth Isaiah’ in order to explain them!” (45). Clements defends the notion that Isa 6:1–8:18 represents a written memoir (Denkschrift) written by the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz himself.

All but one of six chapters in part 2 is new material, and here Clements revisits the subject of his 1980s work Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem (Sheffield: JSOT Press). Clements argues that the so-called accounts A (2 Kgs 18:13–16) and B (2 Kgs 18:17–19:37) refer to the same event and that the angelic destruction of the Assyrian army is theological narrative and not historical. He finds the suggestions for a mysterious or miraculous event to explain Jerusalem’s survival in 701 BCE unnecessary and unfounded. Clements objects to the view that Jerusalem’s deliverance was the result of Egyptian forces, since such an interpretation would run contrary to the anti-Egyptian oracles of Isa 28–31 and erode the reputation of biblical prophecy. He believes account A is historically authentic and that Hezekiah’s actions following the defeat of Lachish represented a surrender of Jerusalem that assured the Assyrian king. Clements argues the narrative of a miraculous deliverance, account B, was written much later, when the events of 701 were a distant memory. He differs from the opinion of von Rad, who argued that a so-called Zion theology, a belief in the inviolability of Jerusalem, preexisted the events of 701. Rather than a focus on Zion, Clements believes that the deliverance narratives of Isa 36–39 function to bolster support for a Davidic heir and were not incorporated as a coherent literary unit into the book of Isaiah until the fifth century. He assigns the account of the angel of the LORD’s miraculous intervention to a late (proto-) apocalyptic redaction to the scroll of Isaiah. The narrative of Hezekiah’s hospitality to the Babylonian envoys in Isa 39 was written in response to the humiliation of Jehoiachin and his family in 598 BCE. Clements argues that the story of Hezekiah’s illness and recovery in Isa 38 was written to address the deportation of Jehoiachin, yet in this case it offered the hope of restoration, particularly in the late sixth century in the figure of Zerubbabel. Clements identifies a
cultic urban ideology within the book of Isaiah, but in only in chapters 40–66; in contrast, chapters 1–39 possesses a royalist ideology.

Part 3 returns to the questions regarding the composition of the book of Isaiah raised in part 1. Clements believes that Isaiah’s prophecies underwent an anti-Assyrian redaction that was then extended to include Babylon and a subsequent apocalyptic editing that gave a universal frame of reference to the prophecy. This last redaction is dated to the postexilic period and focuses on the final eschatological vindication of Jerusalem. Clements believes that Isa 14:24–25, an anti-Assyrian prophecy, did not originate from Isaiah but was composed following 587 BCE in an effort to bolster support for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple. According to Clements, the desire to reestablish the prominence of Jerusalem and its religious significance provides the key to understanding the composition of the book of Isaiah. This focus is evident in Isa 2:1–4:6, what Clements calls the “little book of Zion,” and its position preceding chapters 5–62. In the last stage of the book’s composition, the prophecies underwent not only the influence of apocalyptic, where meaning is hidden in codes and ciphers, but also a focus on Torah.

Clements has long been a key figure in Isaianic studies, and he played a pivotal role in revitalizing research into the unity of the book of Isaiah, so this latest work is an important contribution. For a book containing previously published essays, its significant amount of new research and cohesiveness of argument justifies its publication. For those interested in the composition of Isa 36–39 and the development of the deliverance of Jerusalem tradition within ancient Israel, this book is a must read. Clements is arguably the leading figure on this topic, given that he has already published a monograph on it. In addition, Clements’s arguments for a late apocalyptic redaction to the book contribute to an important discussion within the field, as demonstrated in Joseph Blenkinsopp’s recent work on the topic, Opening the Sealed Book (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). Clements rightly demonstrates the problematic nature of a First Isaiah, and his defense of an Isaiah memoir is well argued.

Given the absence of any definitive answer to the question of what exactly happened to Jerusalem in 701 BCE, some will continue to remain agnostic on the topic. Clements rightly argues that suggestions of an Egyptian intervention run counter to the theology of the book, but perhaps one can make a case that his solution does likewise. While this work is historical in focus, given that Clements occasionally makes comments of theological import (e.g., “This is not because it all has the same author, but because it all bears witness to the same God and to a belief that the whole sequence of events reveals a divine plan and purpose” [191]), and traces the reception of Isaiah within the Christian tradition, it would have been helpful if he more explicitly articulated his theology of
Scripture. Clements insightfully highlights distinctions between royalist and Zionist texts, and between a core Isaianic tradition (chs. 5–62) and an apocalyptic redaction. Yet even he acknowledges that the development of the Zionist tradition will continue to be contested, and the manner in which a late apocalyptic redaction effects a rereading of the entire scroll of Isaiah needs to be more fully explored. The book suffers from a lack of interaction with recent literature on Isaiah such as Blenkinsopp’s three-volume commentary. While his interests lie in the earliest and latest forms of Isaiah’s prophecy, it would be helpful if Clements could outline his views on an exilic form of the text.

Clements’s maturity as a scholar is demonstrated in his ability to situate the composition of Isaiah within the backdrop of ancient Israel’s political and religious history. The work cannot be ignored by Isaianic scholars and those interested in role of the Zion tradition in ancient Israel. While this book is written primarily for specialists, certain chapters would serve as a helpful introduction to key issues of Isaiah study for students.